



Sugar Apple

Posts From The Caribbean

Spaghetti with Arugula, Pancetta and Cream

As a Southerner, I share the Italian reverence for the pig. It's not a long journey from the country ham, bacon and barbecued pulled pork that I grew up eating, to the prosciutto, pancetta and porchetta of Italy. A little pork is the Southerner's secret to making vegetables sing. And it has the same effect on pasta.

Pancetta is made from pork belly meat, similar to American bacon. It comes either in a roll or flat, and is usually cured in salt, though it can also be smoked like bacon. I had smoked flat pancetta on hand so that's what I used. You could substitute another pancetta or even American bacon (though I would opt for good-quality slab bacon if possible). If you use bacon which tends to give off more fat than pancetta, you probably won't need so much olive oil. Pancetta can be salty so do taste the sauce before adding any salt.

You may be tempted to guild the lily with the addition of some onion or garlic. Try to resist- it will muddy both the flavor and texture of the sauce.

3-4 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil
¼ pound of thickly sliced pancetta, chopped into ½" pieces
a large bunch of fresh arugula, roughly chopped
1 cup of heavy cream
1 pound of spaghetti
a handful of freshly grated parmesan cheese, plus more for serving

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. When it's boiling, salt the water and add the spaghetti.

In the meantime, put the olive oil and the pancetta in a large skillet and heat over medium to medium high heat. Cook until the pancetta is nicely browned and a little crispy. Add the arugula and the cream to the skillet and cook on high heat for about 2 minutes. The arugula will start to wilt slightly and the cream will reduce slightly. Don't let it cook too long or the arugula will get too soft and lose its wonderful peppery bite.

When the spaghetti is cooked al dente, scoop out about a cup of the pasta water in a mug or measuring cup and reserve. Drain the pasta and add it to the sauce. Toss the pasta in the sauce until it's all coated. Add a little pasta water if needed to loosen the sauce and keep its "saucy" consistency. Add a handful of parmesan and toss again. Serve immediately with more cheese at the table for grating over the pasta. *This will serve 6 as a first course or 4 as a main course.*

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from the article *Spaghetti with Arugula, Pancetta and Cream* posted on May 16, 2009